

The Effects of Simultaneous Developmental Processes: Factors Relating to the Career Development of Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Youth

Christa K. Schmidt
Johanna E. Nilsson

C. Hetherington (1991) hypothesized that lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) adolescents may experience a "bottleneck effect" in career development because of internal psychological energy focusing on issues surrounding sexual identity. This assertion has not yet been tested, however, in the career development literature. The authors examined the relationship between variables indicative of psychological resources being devoted to managing an LGB identity, social support, and career development. Survey data from 102 LGB youth demonstrated that inner sexual identity conflict and social support predicted unique and shared variance in career maturity and vocational indecision, lending empirical support to the bottleneck hypothesis.

Recently, there has been a call from counseling professionals to shift lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) issues away from the margins in an effort to counteract the dominant heterosexist discourse in the field (Croteau, Lark, Lidderdale, & Chung, 2005), which extends to career research, theory, and counseling. Although the development of LGB individuals has received increased attention from researchers and theorists in recent years (Chung, 2003; Phillips, Ingram, Grant Smith, & Mindes, 2003), this area of research is still considered to be in its infancy (Croteau, Anderson, Distefano, & Kampa-Kokesch, 2000; Croteau, Lark, & Lance, 2005) and even fewer studies have focused on LGB career development (Pope, 1995). Much of what has been published in the career literature focuses on the possibility that the developmental trajectory of LGB individuals is different from that of their heterosexual peers as a result of the stigmatization and social marginalization experienced by this group (Morrow, 1997). Studies of the career development of LGB individuals during adolescence, when identity in many realms is most actively forming (Erikson, 1968), are even scarcer. The paucity of research in this area may be indicative of the difficulty in understanding developmental processes of LGB youth, because scholars must integrate previously theorized career development issues within the context of the stigmatization and social

Christa K. Schmidt, Counseling Center, The University of Maryland, College Park; Johanna E. Nilsson, Department of Counseling Psychology and Counselor Education, University of Missouri-Kansas City. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Christa K. Schmidt, University of Maryland, College Park, 1125 Shoemaker Building, College Park, MD 20742 (e-mail: schmidt@c@umd.edu).

© 2006 by the National Career Development Association. All rights reserved.

marginalization often experienced by LGB individuals (Morrow, 1997; Pope, 2000). This study seeks to contribute to the career development literature on LGB youth by incorporating such theoretical and multicultural knowledge. Specifically, we examined the relationship between variables related to LGB adolescents' sexual identity and career development processes, as well as the contribution of social support to this association.

Sexual Identity Development

Many authors have theorized that LGB individuals must negotiate their overall identities in ways that are unique to their own cultural group because the stigma of being LGB may affect their development (Cass, 1979; McCarn & Fassinger, 1996; Troiden, 1988). For LGB individuals, sexual identity development involves identifying, defining, and accepting their sexual orientation within the context of a heterosexist and homophobic society. LGB adolescents going through this developmental process may be faced with an awareness of feelings that is not congruent with the heterosexual majority. Although many studies have found that most LGB individuals realize their same-sex attractions during adolescence, it has also been noted that the stigma attached to same-sex desire is most pronounced at this developmental stage (D'Augelli, 1996; Nesmith, Burton, & Cosgrove, 1999; Waldner & Magruder, 1999). This paradoxical relationship may result in the confluence of intense intrapersonal and social conflict for LGB youth.

According to stage models of sexual identity development, early stages can be fraught with confusion, inner turmoil, and feelings of personal alienation (Cass, 1979, 1984; McCarn & Fassinger, 1996; Troiden, 1988). Variables associated with the initial concerns of sexual identity development, such as internalized homonegativity, identity confusion, and perceptions of sexual identity development as a difficult process, have been identified as ways to measure the internal conflict regarding sexual identity, or the extent of psychological resources that are devoted to the sexual identity development process (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000). These variables have been found to be more prevalent at the beginning of sexual identity development (Mayfield, 2001; Mohr & Fassinger, 2000) and have been associated with lower levels of self-esteem, more shame (Allen & Oleson, 1999), lower levels of perceived social support (both within the LGB community and outside the LGB community), and more reports of depression and loneliness (Szymanski, Chung, & Balsam, 2001). Thus, internalized homonegativity, identity confusion, and perceptions of sexual identity development as a difficult process are variables that appear to represent the internal psychological conflict LGB individuals experience as they begin to recognize that their sexual identity is different from the sexual identity of the heterosexual majority.

Given the additional psychological energy that LGB adolescents may need to devote to negotiating a marginalized sexual identity, it is important to examine how development in this realm of identity may influence other areas of their lives. Although adolescence has been defined as a period when multiple identities are formed (Erikson, 1968), it has also been suggested that there is a limited amount of psychological energy that can be committed to any one aspect of identity (Raskin, 1989).

Thus, if LGB youth are channeling more psychological resources into sexual identity processes, it is likely that career development, another important task of adolescence, may be affected.

Career Development

Of the life span models of career development, Super's (1957, 1980, 1990) developmental perspective of vocational identity pays particular attention to how psychological energy is focused on career issues during adolescence. Super (1957) theorized that outcomes related to career development in adolescence are the result of inner psychological energy as well as external resources, supports, and contextual influences. This conceptualization is particularly relevant to LGB individuals, because it takes into account the effect of discrimination and marginalization on career development. More recently, Savickas (2002, 2005), building on Super's (1957) developmental theory, applied the original constructs to a multicultural society as part of his career construction theory. According to career construction theory, career development can be conceptualized as a process that is constructed by individuals in response to their environmental context, including the social influences on the self-concept (Savickas, 2005). For LGB individuals, career construction theory is particularly relevant because it examines how sexual identity and the social acceptance or marginalization of such will influence a person as he or she implements the self-concept in career development. Taken together, these theories—Super's (1957, 1980, 1990) original focus on the interaction between the self-concept and the environmental context and Savickas's (2002, 2005) emphasis on how individuals construct their own career development through adaptation to the social context—can be particularly relevant to understanding the career development process of LGB adolescents.

Dunkle (1996), examining LGB individuals from Super's (1957, 1980, 1990) career development theory, discussed how Super (1957, 1980, 1990) maintained that all entities linked in a person's self-concept, including career and sexual identities, will influence one another. The implication of this is that if one area of identity is not fully integrated into the self-concept, other areas of identity will inevitably be affected. Dunkle hypothesized that the early stages of sexual identity development, characterized by high levels of internalized homophobia, fewer social supports, and higher levels of distress for LGB youth, are likely to be related to lower levels of vocational maturity because of stage-related internal stressors and fewer external supports. It has also been suggested that the process of "coming out" in adolescence competes with attention to vocational tasks, ultimately resulting in a struggle between the life roles according to Super's (1957, 1980, 1990) theory (see Belz, 1993).

Career maturity and vocational indecision, constructs important to Super's (1957, 1980, 1990) theory, have received considerable attention in the career development literature, especially as they pertain to adolescents. These variables have been shown to relate to numerous indicators of psychological and career adjustment (Graef, Wells, Hyland, & Muchinsky, 1985; Wanberg & Muchinsky, 1992). For instance, Wallace-Broschius, Serafica, and Osipow (1994) applied Marcia's (1966) identity statuses to

career development and demonstrated that the identity statuses of moratorium, foreclosure, and diffusion, each characterized by identity struggle, were associated with lower levels of career maturity and higher levels of career indecision. Thus, if LGB adolescents are indeed experiencing a struggle between the primary life roles of sexual identity and career identity, it is likely that this population could exhibit lower levels of career maturity and higher levels of vocational indecision because of the internal resources that are devoted to managing a marginalized status.

The Bottleneck Hypothesis

Because of the variables associated with sexual identity development for LGB youth, as well as social oppression and marginalization, sexual minority youth may not be able to negotiate the career development process at the same time they are beginning to recognize and understand that their sexual identities are different. Hetherington (1991) theorized that LGB individuals who are early in their sexual identity development might put other aspects of development on hold to cope with confusion over their sexual identity and other stress-producing changes related to recognizing oneself as LGB. Therefore, she proposed that "during the early stages [of sexual identity development], a bottleneck effect may disallow career exploration" (Hetherington, 1991, p. 134). When LGB individuals recognize that their sexual identity is different, a shift in their understanding of self and expectations of the future may result in distress and psychological turmoil. These changes can make career exploration and decision making difficult if limited psychological resources are instead focused primarily on sexual identity issues (Hetherington, 1991). Thus, according to the bottleneck hypothesis, LGB adolescents may be coping with the career tasks of their development at a slower pace than individuals who are not negotiating a marginalized sexual identity. To date, this theory has not been formally tested in the career development literature, and a quantitative investigation is necessary to determine if career development is in fact influenced by sexual identity development for LGB youth.

Environmental Context

Although the bottleneck hypothesis considers the amount of internal psychological energy devoted to different developmental tasks, it neglects the potentially important influence of environmental context, which has been demonstrated to be an important factor in career development (Savickas, 2005; Super, 1957). Models of sexual identity development and models of career development consistently suggest a complex relationship between the internal developmental processes of individuals and the environment they inhabit (Fassinger & Miller, 1996; Savickas, 2005; Super, 1957). Logically, then, when exploring the developmental processes of LGB youth, it is important to consider the role of their social contexts. Again, because of the prevalence of strong social reactions to LGB communities and individuals, the influence of social context must be considered when investigating the development of this population.

Research findings have identified social support as a specific contextual variable that is consistently linked to the development and psychosocial adjustment of LGB individuals as well as the general population. Social support has also been shown to be an important variable related to healthy adjustment in several facets of development, including sexual identity and career development processes (Hirsh & Rapkin, 1986; Mohr & Fassinger, 2000; Procidano, 1992; Schultheiss, Kress, Manzi, & Glasscock, 2001). Social support among LGB individuals has been associated with lower levels of internalized homophobia, higher levels of identity expression, and higher levels of disclosure (Jordan & Deluty, 1998; Szymanski et al., 2001; Waldner & Magruder, 1999). With regard to career development, Super (1957) proposed that career-related outcomes are the result of personal psychological resources as well as contextual supports and stressors, thus indicating that social support can play a role in career development. Research findings demonstrate the importance of role model support and guidance to career development in LGB individuals (Nauta, Saucier, & Woodard, 2001), and having several types of support from close friends and family has been identified as a major theme in career exploration and decision making in the general population (Schultheiss et al., 2001). Therefore, when examining the relationship between variables related to sexual identity and career development, it is important to include social support as a potential contributing factor.

Although numerous scholars have posited theoretical links between career development and the process of sexual identity development of LGB individuals, further empirical investigation is necessary to confirm these propositions. Chung (2003) called for more theory-based research to better understand the development of LGB individuals. Accordingly, the present study examined the relationship between variables indicative of (a) internal psychological resources that are devoted to recognizing oneself as LGB, (b) social support, and (c) career development. It was hypothesized that variables related to sexual identity would predict career maturity and vocational indecision. Furthermore, social support was expected to contribute unique and shared variance in career maturity and vocational indecision along with and beyond the variance accounted for by indicators of psychological energy invested in sexual identity development.

Method

Participants

Participants were 102 self-identified LGB youth: 68 identified as lesbian, gay, or queer; 32 identified as bisexual; 1 identified as bicurious; and 1 selected "other." With regard to gender, 65 participants were male, 34 were female, 2 were transgender, and 1 did not report his or her gender. Most participants (71.6%) were Caucasian, followed by African American (14.7%), Hispanic (6.9%), and Asian (1%); 6% did not indicate their race/ethnicity. (Percentages do not equal 100% because of rounding.) The age of the participants ranged from 15 to 19 years. To be eligible for participation, individuals needed to be actively enrolled in a local middle school or high school or have completed school (or dropped out) no more than 6 months prior to participation. The majority of students were

in high school: 2% were in 9th grade, 7.8% were in 10th grade, 33.3% were in 11th grade, and 32.4% were in 12th grade. However, of the 24.5% who indicated that they were not currently in school, 35.7% stated that they had dropped out, 57.1% had graduated within the past 6 months, and 7.1% did not indicate why they were not currently in school. (Percentages do not equal 100% because of rounding.)

Procedure

A research team recruited participants by visiting organizations that served LGB youth in two midwestern cities and by distributing surveys in a popular community establishment frequented by this population. For participants who were younger than 18, parental consent would normally have been necessary for participation. However, because disclosure of participation might also have resulted in “outing” youth to their parents, which could have detrimental consequences, youth assent was all that was required. Upon signing informed consent forms, all potential participants were required to complete a screening questionnaire to determine if they met the eligibility requirements of the study (i.e., active enrollment in high school and self-identification as LGB). Participants were compensated \$20 for completing the surveys.

Instruments

Demographics. A form was included in the survey packets to assess demographic variables, including sexual orientation, education status, age, gender, race/ethnicity, family composition, and disclosure of LGB identity to others.

Inner sexual identity conflict. The bottleneck hypothesis is based on the assumption of the availability of limited psychological energy. Thus, three variables that were indicators of more versus less psychological energy being used on sexual identity development tasks were measured: identity confusion, internalized homonegativity, and perceptions of sexual identity development as a difficult process. The subscales that correspond to these three constructs were taken from the Lesbian and Gay Identity Scale (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000). The Identity Confusion subscale measured the extent to which an individual felt confused or uncertain about his or her sexual orientation (e.g., “I keep changing my mind about my sexual orientation”). The Internalized Homonegativity subscale measured the extent to which an individual harbored negative attitudes toward himself or herself as a person with a minority sexual orientation (e.g., “I would rather be straight if I could”). Finally, the Difficult Process subscale measured the extent to which an individual viewed his or her sexual identity development process as slow and difficult (e.g., “Admitting to myself that I’m a [lesbian/gay man/bisexual] has been a very painful process”). Validity evidence for these three subscales includes negative correlations with self-esteem and lower levels of sexual identity development (Mohr & Fassinger, 2000). Furthermore, the reliability estimates for each subscale were originally reported as follows: .77 for Identity Confusion, .79 for Internalized Homonegativity, and .79 for Difficult Process. Statistically significant correlations between subscales in the current study were as follows: Identity Confusion and Internalized Homonegativity ($r = .38, p < .01$), Internalized Homonegativity and Difficult Process ($r = .42, p < .01$), and

Identity Confusion and Difficult Process ($r = .39, p < .01$). Because these subscales were correlated above .35, representing medium to large correlations (Cohen, 1988), the three indicators were combined into one scale, Inner Sexual Identity Conflict. This instrument is composed of 19 Likert scale items and has an internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha) of .84.

Social support. The Social Support Scale for Children (Harter, 1985) was used to measure perceived social support. Although the original measure was developed for use with both children and adolescents, the language used was geared toward children as young as 8 years old. Therefore, some of the wording was altered for use with a high school population. This 24-item scale measures perceived support from four sources: parents, teachers, close friends, and classmates. For each item, two statements were presented, representing dichotomies of perceptions of social support. For instance, 1 item contains two statements, such as "Some youth have parents who don't really understand them" and "Other youth have parents who do understand them." For each set of statements, participants are asked to choose which statement is closer to their perceptions of themselves. Then, participants are asked to respond if the statement they have chosen is "sort of true for me" or "really true for me" by placing an X on the appropriate line. Thus, the four points on the Likert scale are represented by two response choices for each of two statements. Previous research has indicated internal consistency estimates for adolescents ranging from .77 to .88 (Harter, 1985). The current study demonstrated an internal consistency of .91. Convergent validity has been demonstrated with the Student Social Support Scale (Nolten, 1995), another measure of adolescents' perceptions of social support. Construct validity (Arce, 1997) has been evidenced by the scale's positive relationship with Coopersmith's (1967) Self-Esteem Inventory.

Career Maturity Inventory-Attitude Scale (CMI-A; Crites, 1995). Career maturity was measured with the CMI-A, a 25-item instrument designed for research and practice in the career development of adolescents in Grades 6-12. This scale measures feelings, subjective reactions, and dispositions that an individual has toward making a career choice and entering the world of work (Luzzo, 1995). Internal consistency estimates have been shown to range from .73 to .75, and 1-year test-retest reliability has been reported to be .71 (Crites, 1995). The internal consistency estimate of the CMI-A with the sample used in this study was .72. Westbrook (1983) reported that several studies have found criterion-related validity evidence for the CMI-A, including its relationship to realistic occupational aspirations, goal orientation, career decisiveness, and commitment to career choice in adolescent samples.

Career Decision Scale (CDS; Osipow, Carney, Winer, Yanico, & Koschier, 1976). The CDS is intended to measure the extent to which an adolescent is experiencing vocational indecision or certainty. It consists of 19 items, including a 2-item Certainty scale and a 16-item Indecision scale. Items are responded to on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not at all like me*) to 4 (*exactly like me*). High scores represent greater uncertainty. Test-retest reliability estimates have been demonstrated to be .81 and higher (Osipow, Carney, & Barak, 1976). The internal consistency estimate for the current study was .79. Concurrent validity evidence has been re-

ported based on correlations with related measures, such as an instrument of career decision-making self-efficacy, and other personality variables, including lack of confidence, personal conflict, and perception of barriers to preferred choice (Osipow & Schweikert, 1981). The CDS has also shown a negative relationship ($r = -.23$) with the Planning subscale of the Career Development Inventory, indicating higher levels of indecision associated with lower levels of career maturity.

Results

Table 1 reports means, standard deviations, and correlations between study variables. To test the hypotheses, we conducted two multiple regression analyses. In the first regression, inner sexual identity conflict and social support were the predictor variables and career maturity (assessed by the CMI-A) was the criterion. The second regression had the same predictors, but the criterion was vocational indecision, as measured by the CDS. Inner sexual identity conflict was entered in the first step in all regression equations for two primary reasons. First, Super (1957, 1980) theorized that self-concept, and thus internal psychological processes, was central to career development, having a direct impact on how an adolescent would progress through the developmental stages associated with this age group. Second, the bottleneck hypothesis contends that internal sexual identity conflict may be responsible for career development outcomes alone. Therefore, social support was entered in all equations in the second step.

The result from the first regression demonstrated that career maturity was predicted by inner sexual identity conflict (for Step 1, $F(1, 96) = 9.23$, $p = .00$, $R^2 = .09$) as well as by the combination of inner sexual identity conflict and social support: for Step 2, $F(2, 95) = 12.65$, $p = .00$, $R^2 = .21$, $\Delta R^2 = .12$, $\Delta F(1, 95) = 14.75$, $p = .00$ (see Table 2).

The results from the second regression showed that vocational indecision was predicted by inner sexual identity conflict (for Step 1, $F(1, 96) = 4.12$, $p = .05$, $R^2 = .04$) and by the combination of inner

TABLE 1

Means, Standard Deviations, and Pearson's Bivariate Correlations Between Career Variables, Sexual Identity Variables, Social Support, and Age ($N = 102$)

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5
1. CMI-A	14.78	3.91	—	-.67**	-.30**	.40**	.02
2. CDS	36.65	9.94		—	.21*	-.27**	-.02
3. ISIC	2.84	0.95			—	-.20	-.04
4. SSS	3.10	0.54				—	.02
5. Age	17.90	0.96					—

Note. CMI-A = Career Maturity Inventory–Attitude Scale; CDS = Career Decision Scale; ISIC = Inner Sexual Identity Conflict; SSS = Social Support Scale for Children (adapted version).

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

TABLE 2

**Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables
Predicting Career Maturity of LGB Adolescents (N = 102)**

Variable	B	SE B	β	t	R ²
Step 1					
ISIC	-1.21	.40	-.30	-3.04**	.09**
Step 2					
ISIC	-0.92	.38	-.23	-2.44*	
SSS	2.58	.67	.36	3.84**	.21**

Note. LGB = lesbian, gay, and bisexual; ISIC = Inner Sexual Identity Conflict; SSS = Social Support Scale for Children (adapted version). $\Delta R^2 = .12$, $\Delta F(1, 95) = 14.75$, $p = .00$.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

sexual identity conflict and social support: for Step 2, $F(2, 95) = 5.10$, $p = .01$, $R^2 = .10$, $\Delta R^2 = .06$, $\Delta F(1, 95) = 5.87$, $p < .05$ (see Table 3). The results indicate that inner sexual identity conflict and social support were both statistically significant contributors to the variance in vocational indecision.

Discussion

In this study, it was believed that the inner psychological conflict associated with the early stages of sexual identity development and the amount of social support perceived by LGB adolescents would predict career maturity and vocational indecision in this population. As hypothesized, the results of the first regression model indicated that career maturity was predicted by inner sexual identity conflict and social support, with a large effect size (Cohen, 1988). Similar results were found for vocational indecision in the second regression. Again, both inner sexual identity conflict and social support were statistically significant predictors of vocational indecision, and both demonstrated a medium effect size (Cohen, 1988). LGB adolescents who reported higher levels of inner sexual identity con-

TABLE 3

**Summary of Hierarchical Regression Analysis for Variables
Predicting Vocational Indecision of LGB Adolescents (N = 102)**

Variable	B	SE B	β	t	R ²
Step 1					
ISIC	2.08	1.03	.20	2.03	.04*
Step 2					
ISIC	1.62	1.02	.16	0.12	
SSS	-4.41	1.82	-.24	-2.42*	.10**

Note. LGB = lesbian, gay, and bisexual; ISIC = Inner Sexual Identity Conflict; SSS = Social Support Scale for Children (adapted version). $\Delta R^2 = .06$, $\Delta F(1, 95) = 5.87$, $p < .05$.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

flict and lower levels of social support reported lower scores on career maturity and higher scores on vocational indecision. Together, these findings give initial empirical support to the bottleneck hypothesis.

The findings suggest that experiencing sexual identity conflict and perceiving low levels of support may be related to difficulties with focusing on career development tasks of adolescence. It appears that some LGB adolescents may be directing their energy toward sexual identity development instead of career development, possibly because of the limited psychological resources and contextual supports associated with a marginalized status. Conversely, it is possible that the reverse may also be true: LGB adolescents who have low levels of inner sexual identity conflict may have higher levels of career maturity and lower levels of vocational indecision, showing that more psychological energy is devoted to career development when conflict regarding sexual identity is at a lower level. Although the direction of the relationship is not clear, our findings suggest that a relationship does exist between sexual identity development, social support, and career development.

The preliminary support for the bottleneck hypothesis in the current study sheds light on the career development processes of LGB youth. The results suggest that career development is related to sexual identity development for sexual minority youth, and it is possible that this relationship may be most salient for those having a particularly difficult time with establishing their sexual identity. However, it is important to consider how demonstrating lower levels of career maturity and higher levels of vocational indecision is likely preferable to foreclosing on career decisions without adequate exploration. In examining Marcia's (1966) identity development coping reactions as they relate to career development, Wallace-Brosious et al. (1994) found that lower scores of career maturity and higher levels of vocational indecision were most in line with identity moratorium and diffusion statuses than with identity foreclosure. By this logic, the LGB youth in this study may be experiencing either moratorium, and therefore are actively exploring their options but are not ready to commit to a vocational choice, or diffusion, whereby they have not yet engaged in active career exploration. Both identity statuses suggest that exploration and commitment will eventually follow, as compared with identity foreclosure, which is considered to be a premature commitment without extensive exploration. To further understand this possibility, it is necessary to measure the exploring behaviors of LGB youth, rather than their career maturity and vocational indecision alone, as was done in the current study. By determining whether LGB youth are indeed actively exploring career choices before making a commitment, future researchers will be able to provide a better understanding of the career development of LGB youth.

In addition to lending empirical support to the bottleneck hypothesis, the current findings also support theories that address the importance of environmental context to career development, such as Super's (1957) developmental theory and Savickas's (2005) career construction theory. Consistent with these theories and the literature that has demonstrated a clear relationship between social support and career variables (Harris, Moritzen, Robitschek, Imhoff, & Lynch, 2001; Swanson, 1992), social support predicted career maturity and vocational indecision. These find-

ings support Super's (1957) and Savickas's (2005) ideas that external contextual variables, such as social support, contribute to the way an individual progresses and constructs his or her own career development.

It is interesting to consider the types of social support, in the subcontext of overall perceptions of support, that are most salient. Although not examined in this study, it is possible that adolescents' perceptions of support from certain individuals may be more important to adolescents' career and sexual identity adjustment than adolescents' perceptions of support from other individuals. Specifically, research has shown evidence that parental support and peer support may contribute differently to adolescent overall adjustment (Colarossi, 2001; Meeus, 2003; Talmi, 2002). Hence, when interpreting the results of the present study, it is possible that support from different individuals, whether it is from parents or peers, may be more critical in the relationship between career development and sexual identity conflict. Future studies investigating such differences in social support are recommended.

Limitations

Although this study provides insight into a unique population with respect to career development, there are also limiting factors that need to be addressed. It is important to consider the findings of this study in the full context of LGB youth who are openly exploring their sexual identity, as was the case with our sample, and those who may still be "in the closet." Many adolescents who will eventually identify as LGB are not "out" in the community; thus, we were unable to examine the relationship between sexual identity and career development for those individuals who may be the most conflicted about their identity. It is possible that individuals who are not open about their sexuality and who are, therefore, not receiving social support concerning these issues, may experience a larger impact on career development than individuals who have started coming out. As the theories around sexual identity development propose, the earliest stages of development are characterized by internal confusion and questioning that are often kept to oneself (Cass, 1979, 1984; Fassinger & Miller, 1996; McCarn & Fassinger, 1996). Because we did not have access to individuals who had not disclosed their sexual orientation to anyone, the findings of this study may not represent the full range of experience of the adolescent LGB population. Specifically, those individuals who are experiencing inner sexual identity conflict but are not out to anyone in their support network may be experiencing even lower levels of career development because they are forced to handle their conflict on their own. Conversely, it may also be the case that those individuals who are not out put more of their psychological energy into career-related tasks, leaving sexual identity development for a later time. Thus, the results of this study must be considered as they apply to the segment of the LGB youth population openly exploring their sexual identity.

Our findings must also be considered within the overall cultural and environmental context of the sample. Career development of adolescents, on the whole, has been theorized and found to relate to greater environmental contextual variables, including socioeconomic status, cultural context, school differences, and historical time (Lent, Brown, & Hackett, 1996; Schmitt-Rodermund & Silbereisen, 1998; Vondracek & Reitzle, 1998),

as well as racial and gender demographics (Fouad & Keeley, 1992; Hardin, Leong, & Osipow, 2001; Luzzo, 1993; Wanberg & Muchinsky, 1992; Westbrook & Sanford, 1991). The data for this study were collected in middle- to upper-middle-class urban settings, and the majority of participants were living at home and enrolled in public high school. The career development of these students would likely be much different from adolescents, either LGB or heterosexual, who were living in a different cultural context. It is possible that if the career development of adolescents were compared across contexts, the LGB youth of the current study would more closely resemble their heterosexual peers than they would LGB or heterosexual youth from low-income or rural areas that may encompass vastly different resources for education and career development. Furthermore, although diversity was captured in the sample, the majority of participants were White male adolescents. Although findings have been mixed with regard to the racial and gender differences in career development (Fouad & Keeley, 1992; Luzzo, 1995; Powell & Luzzo, 1998), it is important to interpret the findings with regard to this limited sample. In both career research and counseling applications, it is essential to consider the unique cultural context of the individual as well as racial and gender factors that may have an impact on career development and sexual identity (Hartung et al., 1998).

Implications

Despite its limitations, the present study provides initial support for the association between sexual identity and career development for LGB youth. Future research should be aimed at understanding the variables that contribute to this connection. For instance, in addition to social support, do school environment, family variables, and the availability of LGB career role models contribute to variance in the relationship between career development and sexual identity development? It is likely that a strong social support network, an affirming school and family environment, and the presence of LGB career role models would have a positive impact on the career development of LGB adolescents. It would be interesting to determine which of these variables appears most salient in optimizing career development for this population. Therefore, it is important to examine how other variables contribute to the relationship discovered in the current study.

Qualitative research examining how LGB adolescents construct their career identity would also be useful from a career construction theoretical perspective. Researchers could use this new and innovative theory to examine such diverse groups as LGB individuals in the career development process. By collecting narratives from LGB youth and adults, counseling professionals could develop a better understanding of how this process is both unique and similar for LGB individuals (Bujold, 2004; Savickas, 2002).

With regard to the practical applications of the current study, the findings indicate the importance of addressing potential sexual identity concerns when conducting career counseling with LGB youth. Any career interventions aimed at assisting LGB youth should take into account how these two aspects of development may be influencing each other, rather than examining one aspect of development as isolated from the other. Thus, when conducting counseling with this population, we recommend

that professionals also address how these individuals are coping with their sexual identity development and all of the difficulties that come with negotiating a minority sexual orientation, including homophobia and heterosexism. In doing so, LGB adolescents can attend to career development tasks while developing their sexual identity, rather than channeling their psychological energy into one aspect of development, potentially neglecting the other.

Furthermore, knowing that inner sexual identity conflict relates to the career development process for LGB adolescents can inform the training of career counselors and counseling psychologists working with this population. Professionals should assess where LGB adolescents are placing the majority of their psychological energy, whether it is on the tasks of sexual identity development, career development, or some other aspect of development. By knowing where individuals are focusing their energy, counseling professionals can attend to what is most salient for them and begin to try to help them allocate resources to other areas that are in need of attention. Counseling professionals can also help generate social support to increase the perceived amount of resources that are available to cope with these difficulties. In essence, counselors and psychologists can help widen the bottleneck, allowing developmental processes to occur simultaneously. Through awareness of the relationship between sexual identity development and career development, professionals will be more equipped to work with LGB adolescent clients in assisting with their career concerns and struggles.

References

- Allen, D. J., & Oleson, T. (1999). Shame and internalized homophobia in gay men. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 37, 33-43.
- Arce, E. M. (1997). The effects of social support and self-esteem on career indecision: A cross-cultural comparison between two groups of undergraduate students. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 57, 2873.
- Belz, J. R. (1993). Sexual orientation as a factor in career development. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 41, 197-200.
- Bujold, C. (2004). Constructing career through narrative. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 64, 470-484.
- Cass, V. C. (1979). Homosexual identity formation: A theoretical model. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 4, 219-235.
- Cass, V. C. (1984). Homosexual identity formation: Testing a theoretical model. *Journal of Sex Research*, 20, 143-167.
- Chung, Y. B. (2003). Career counseling with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered persons: The next decade. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 52, 78-86.
- Cohen, J. (1988). *Statistical power analysis for the behavioral sciences* (2nd ed.). San Diego, CA: Academic Press.
- Colarossi, L. G. (2001). Adolescent gender differences in social support: Structure, function, and provider type. *Social Work Research*, 25, 233-241.
- Coopersmith, S. (1967). *The antecedents of self-esteem*. New York: Freeman.
- Crites, J. O. (1995). *The Career Maturity Inventory*. Boulder, CO: Bridges.com.
- Croteau, J. M., Anderson, M. Z., Distefano, T. M., & Kampa-Kokesch, S. (2000). Lesbian, gay, and bisexual psychology: Reviewing foundations and planning construction. In R. M. Perez, K. A. DeBord, & K. J. Bieschke (Eds.), *Handbook of counseling and psychotherapy with lesbian, gay, and bisexual clients* (pp. 383-408). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

- Croteau, J. M., Lark, J. S., & Lance, T. S. (2005). Our stories will be told: Deconstructing the heterosexist discourse in the counseling profession. In J. M. Croteau, J. S. Lark, M. A. Lidderdale, & Y. B. Chung (Eds.), *Deconstructing heterosexism in the counseling professions: A narrative approach* (pp. 1-16). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Croteau, J. M., Lark, J. S., Lidderdale, M. A., & Chung, Y. B. (Eds.). (2005). *Deconstructing heterosexism in the counseling professions: A narrative approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- D'Augelli, A. R. (1996). Lesbian, gay, and bisexual development during adolescence and early adulthood. R. P. Cabaj & T. S. Stein (Eds.), *Textbook of homosexuality and mental health* (pp. 267-288). Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Press.
- Dunkle, J. H. (1996). Toward an integration of gay and lesbian identity development and Super's life-span approach. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 48, 149-159.
- Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity: Youth and crisis*. New York: Norton.
- Fassinger, R. E., & Miller, B. A. (1996). Validation of an inclusive model of sexual minority identity formation on a sample of gay men. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 32, 53-78.
- Fouad, N. A., & Keeley, T. J. (1992). The relationship between attitudinal and behavioral aspects of career maturity. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 40, 257-271.
- Graef, M. I., Wells, D. L., Hyland, A. M., & Muchinsky, P. M. (1985). Life history antecedents of vocational indecision. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 27, 276-297.
- Hardin, E. E., Leong, F. T. L., & Osipow, S. H. (2001). Cultural relativity in the conceptualization of career maturity. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 58, 36-52.
- Harris, J. I., Moritzen, S. K., Robitschek, C., Imhoff, A., & Lynch, J. L. A. (2001). The comparative contributions of congruence and social support in career outcomes. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 49, 314-323.
- Harter, S. (1985). *Manual for the Social Support Scale for Children*. Denver, CO: University of Denver.
- Hartung, P. J., Vandiver, B., Leong, F. T. L., Pope, M., Niles, S. G., & Farrow, B. (1998). Appraising cultural identity in career-development assessment and counseling. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 46, 276-293.
- Hetherington, C. (1991). Life planning and career counseling with gay and lesbian students. In N. J. Evans & V. A. Wall (Eds.), *Beyond tolerance: Gays, lesbians, and bisexuals on campus* (pp. 131-145). Alexandria, VA: American College Personnel Association.
- Hirsh, B. J., & Rapkin, B. D. (1986). Social networks and adult social identities: Profiles and correlates of support and rejection. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 14, 395-412.
- Jordan, K. M., & Deluty, R. H. (1998). Coming out for lesbian women: Its relation to anxiety, positive affectivity, self-esteem, and social support. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 35, 41-63.
- Lent, R. W., Brown, S. D., & Hackett, G. (1996). Career development from a social cognitive perspective. In D. Brown, L. Brooks, & Associates (Eds.), *Career choice and development* (3rd ed., pp. 373-421). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Luzzo, D. A. (1993). Predicting the career maturity of undergraduates: A comparison of personal, educational, and psychological factors. *Journal of College Student Development*, 34, 271-275.
- Luzzo, D. A. (1995). Gender differences in college students' career maturity and perceived barriers in career development. *Journal of Counseling & Development*, 73, 319-322.
- Marcia, J. E. (1966). Development and validation of ego-identity status. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 3, 551-558.
- Mayfield, W. (2001). The development of an internalized homonegativity inventory for gay men. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 41, 53-76.
- McCarn, S. R., & Fassinger, R. E. (1996). Revisioning sexual minority identity formation: A new model of lesbian identity and its implications for counseling and research. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 24, 508-534.

- Meeus, W. (2003). Parental and peer support, identity development and psychological well-being in adolescence. *Psychology: The Journal of the Hellenic Psychological Society*, 10, 192-201.
- Mohr, J., & Fassinger, R. E. (2000). Measuring dimensions of lesbian and gay male experience. *Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development*, 33, 66-90.
- Morrow, S. L. (1997). Career development of lesbian and gay youth: Effects of sexual orientation, coming out, and homophobia. *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Social Services*, 7, 1-15.
- Nauta, M. M., Saucier, A. M., & Woodard, L. E. (2001). Interpersonal influences on students' academic and career decisions: The impact of sexual orientation. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 49, 352-362.
- Nesmith, A. A., Burton, D. L., & Cosgrove, T. J. (1999). Gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth and young adults: Social support in their own words. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 37, 95-108.
- Nolten, P. W. (1995). Conceptualization and measurement of social support: The development of the Student Social Support Scale. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 55, 3456.
- Osipow, S. H., Carney, C. G., & Barak, A. (1976). A scale of educational-vocational undecidedness: A typological approach. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 9, 233-243.
- Osipow, S. H., Carney, C. G., Winer, J., Yanico, B., & Koschier, M. (1976). *Career Decision Scale* (3rd ed.). Odessa, FL: Psychological Assessment Resources.
- Osipow, S. H., & Schweikert, D. (1981). The Career Decision Scale: A test of concurrent validity. *Psychological Reports*, 48, 759-761.
- Phillips, J. C., Ingram, K. M., Grant Smith, N., & Mindes, E. J. (2003). Methodological and content review of lesbian-, gay-, and bisexual-related articles in counseling journals: 1990-1999. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 31, 25-62.
- Pope, M. (1995). Career interventions for gay and lesbian clients: A synopsis of practice knowledge and research needs. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 44, 191-203.
- Pope, M. (2000). Preventing school violence aimed at gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender youths. In D. S. Sandhu & C. B. Aspy (Eds.), *Violence in American schools: A practical guide for counselors* (pp. 285-303). Alexandria, VA: American Counseling Association.
- Powell, D. F., & Luzzo, D. A. (1998). Evaluating factors associated with the career maturity of high school students. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 47, 145-158.
- Procidano, M. E. (1992). The nature of perceived social support: Findings of meta-analytic studies. In C. D. Spielberger & J. N. Butcher (Eds.), *Advances in personality assessment* (pp. 1-26). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Raskin, P. M. (1989). Identity status research: Implications for career counseling. *Journal of Adolescence*, 12, 375-388.
- Savickas, M. L. (2002). Career construction: A developmental theory of vocational behavior. In D. Brown & Associates (Eds.), *Career choice and development* (4th ed., pp. 149-205). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Savickas, M. L. (2005). The theory and practice of career construction. In D. Brown & R. W. Lent (Eds.), *Career development and counseling* (pp. 42-70). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.
- Schmitt-Rodermund, E., & Silbereisen, R. K. (1998). Career maturity determinants: Individual development, social context, and historical time. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 47, 16-31.
- Schultheiss, D. E. P., Kress, H. M., Manzi, A. J., & Glasscock, J. M. J. (2001). Relational influences in career development: A qualitative inquiry. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 29, 214-239.
- Super, D. E. (1957). *The psychology of careers*. New York: Harper Press.
- Super, D. E. (1980). A life-span, life-space approach to career development. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 13, 282-298.

- Super, D. E. (1990). A life-span, life-space approach to career development. In D. Brown, L. Brooks, & Associates (Eds.), *Career choice and development* (pp.197-261). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Swanson, J. L. (1992). Vocational behavior, 1989-1991: Life-span career development and reciprocal interaction of work and nonwork. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 41, 101-161.
- Szymanski, D. M., Chung, Y. B., & Balsam, K. F. (2001). Psychosocial correlates of internalized homophobia in lesbians. *Measurement and Evaluation in Counseling and Development*, 34, 27-38.
- Talmi, A. (2002). Challenges and social support during the transition to high school. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 62(7B), 3404.
- Troiden, R. R. (1988). The formation of homosexual identities. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 17, 43-73.
- Vondracek, F. W., & Reitzle, M. (1998). The viability of career maturity theory: A developmental-contextual perspective. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 47, 6-15.
- Waldner, L. K., & Magruder, B. (1999). Coming out to parents: Perceptions of family relations, perceived resources, and identity expression as predictors of identity disclosure for gay and lesbian adolescents. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 37, 83-100.
- Wallace-Brosious, A., Serafica, F. C., & Osipow, S. H. (1994). Adolescent career development: Relationships to self-concept and identity status. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 4, 127-149.
- Wanberg, C. R., & Muchinsky, P. M. (1992). A typology of career decision status: Validity extension of the Vocational Decision Status Model. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 39, 71-80.
- Westbrook, B. W. (1983). Career maturity: The concept, the instrument, and the research. In W. B. Walsh & S. H. Osipow (Eds.), *Handbook of vocational psychology* (pp. 263-303). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Westbrook, B. W., & Sanford, E. E. (1991). The validity of career maturity attitude measures among Black and White high school students. *The Career Development Quarterly*, 39, 199-208.

Copyright of Career Development Quarterly is the property of National Career Development Association and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.